



LAND USE SERVICES DEPARTMENT PLANNING STAFF REPORT



HEARING DATE: September 7, 2006

AGENDA ITEM NO: 2

Project Description

Applicant: Land Use Services Department
Proposal: General Plan Update project to include: an update of the County General Plan goals, policies and maps (including associated land use district changes); the establishment of 13 community plans; and a complete revision to Title 8 of the San Bernardino County Code (the Development Code).
Index: CW1-849N
CATS: 00243CQ0
Community: Countywide
Location: Countywide
Staff: Randy Scott

Background

Preparation of Community Plans

A key component of the General Plan Update project is the preparation of 13 community plans. These community plans identify goals and policies which are unique or important to each particular community. When the 1989 General Plan and Development Code were adopted, the community plans which were in effect at that time were simultaneously repealed. Any unique development standards which were identified within the repealed community plans were incorporated into the 1989 Development Code.

The Phase I Scoping of the 2006 General Plan update recommended that the Community Plan program be reinstated to help fulfill the need for development guidance within these 13 communities. Community plans focus on a particular region or community within the overall County General Plan.

To aid County staff and our General Plan update consultants in the re-establishment of community plans, Advisory Committees were established within each Community Plan area. These committees provided invaluable assistance in formulating the community goals and policies and facilitating public input into each plan. Throughout the entire community plan process, 53 different meetings were conducted in preparation of the 13 draft community plans.

As an integral part of the overall Plan, community plans must be consistent with the General Plan. Community plans build upon the goals and policies of each element of the General Plan. Regional policies have been developed within the General Plan, which address policies that are common to each of the three geographic regions (Valley, Mountain and Desert) of the County. Community plan goals have been customized to meet the specific needs or unique circumstances or wishes of individual communities. The goals and policies within community

Action taken by the Planning Commission on this item may be appealed to the Board.
Note: Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors are not appealable.

Yes ☐ No ☒

plans guide development in a manner that maintains the existing balance of land uses, preserves the character of the community, and complements existing development. The following are the proposed community plans within the unincorporated areas of the County.

- Bear Valley
- Bloomington
- Crest Forest
- Hilltop
- Homestead Valley
- Joshua Tree
- Lake Arrowhead
- Lucerne Valley
- Lytle Creek
- Morongo Valley
- Muscoy
- Oak Glen
- Phelan/Pinon Hills

Each of the community plans within a given geographical region is structured with the same general format, and has many common policies. The policies common to several community plans within a region formed the basis for preparing the Regional Goals and Policies. The Regional Policies also apply to areas outside of specified community plan areas. The format of the community plans mirrors the overall format of the General Plan to provide consistency between each of the documents.

Because the Oak Hills Community Plan was recently adopted by the Board of Supervisors, it will merely be reformatted to be consistent with the other 13 community plans.

The following list of community plans includes all of the Desert Regional Community Plans as well as the unique issues which each community plan addresses. The September 7 hearing will cover the following community plans:

- Homestead Valley Community Plan - A key concern in this community is to retain the primarily low density, rural residential desert character of this plan area. Other important issues include commercial uses along Highway 247 in the central Landers area, as well as adequate circulation and road standards.
- Joshua Tree Community Plan - Key concerns include maintaining the identity of Joshua Tree as the gateway to the Joshua Tree National Park. Additional concerns include finding a balance between the need for infrastructure such as roads and water, and the desire to conserve natural resources and maintain the desert character, along with the development of a viable town center for local businesses.
- Lucerne Valley Community Plan - Key concerns include maintaining and preserving the quality of the desert while allowing for economic development to provide greater opportunities for local jobs.
- Morongo Valley Community Plan - Key issues include assuring that there are adequate and reliable sources of potable water, as well as the encouragement of commercial growth in the center of the community along Highway 62, while maintaining the existing character of the desert and maintenance of low density development in the majority of the community.
- Phelan/Pinon Hills Community Plan - Key issues include maintaining the rural residential desert character of these two communities along with assuring that the communities have adequate and reliable potable water supplies, expanding recreation and dedicated open space, adequate commercial services to support local community needs and enhancing business opportunities.

Responses to Issues Raised at the August 24, 2006 Planning Commission Hearing

Comment: Shouldn't all occurrences of split zoning in the County should be corrected?

Response: On smaller parcels, generally under one acre, split zoning is generally discouraged, due to the potential conflict between incompatible land uses in a small area. Larger parcels, particularly those in the more remote areas of the desert, may need to be split-zoned if they are multi-acre parcels, in order to allow for different uses that may be needed in a rural area.

Comment: There was inadequate notice provided of the general plan update project.

Response: Anyone who requested to be added to our mailing list was added. Legal notices in newspapers met all legal advertising requirements. The cost of noticing every property owner within the County would have been very expensive.

Comment: The General Plan Advisory Committees (GPAC's) in the mountain communities were "stacked "with developers.

Response: We disagree. Every attempt was made to form a balanced, evenly represented GPAC in each community. The mountain GPAC's were not "stacked" with developers.

Comment: The draft general plan includes a policy which supports the desire of residents to remain in unincorporated communities if they so choose. This is inaccurate, as residents do not have a choice to remain within an unincorporated area if an adjoining city, in whose sphere the unincorporated community is located, wishes to annex the area in question.

Response: For the most part, this is an incorrect statement. There is a provision in State law which provides for the annexations of "islands" of unincorporated territories by cities without allowing island residents to protest an annexation approval by the LAFCO. However, this provision in State law is set to sunset by January 1, 2007. This island legislation applies to only a limited number of annexations in San Bernardino County. Annexations are generally initiated by the residents or property owners of an area proposed for annexation, or by a resolution adopted by an adjoining city. The petition must contain the signatures of a specified percentage of the voters or property owners in the affected area. Should the LAFCO ultimately approve the annexation application, LAFCO procedures also provide for a protest hearing procedure by the affected residents or property owners. As such, there is a statutory process whereby affected residents possess the ability to reject an annexation proposal.

Comment: I would like a different zoning designation on my property than I currently have. Can the county change it for me?

Response: As part of the general plan update, the county is making only limited zoning changes to those areas where the county made an error in its zoning. These zoning changes are being made in only a few areas of the county.

Comment: If someone doesn't have their own computer, can free hard copies of all General Plan update documents be made available?

Response: The reproduction costs for all of the General Plan documentation would be very expensive if provided at no cost to everyone. We are providing CD's at no cost to anyone who requests one, as well as making the documents available on-line, so they are readable at public libraries at no cost. Unfortunately, we will need to charge a reproduction fee for any hard copies which are requested.

Comment: I feel that special attention needs to be focused on fragile areas of the county, like the mountain communities.

Response: Every attempt was made to recognize the concerns of protecting the mountain flora and fauna and provide effective goals and policies to support this effort.

Comment: The biological resources section of the Background Reports has not been updated adequately.

Response: The Background Reports were merely a starting point for the preparation of the General Plan documentation. We do not feel the Background Reports are inadequate for their intended purpose.

Comment: I have a concern about having to review the goals and policies of the draft general plan prior to the circulation of the draft EIR.

Response: There will be adequate time to review the general plan goals and policies relative to the draft EIR during the EIR public review period.

Recommendation

CONTINUE the hearing on the General Plan Update to September 21, 2006, to consider Community Plans within the Mountain Region.

Exhibits

- [1. Draft Homestead Valley Community Plan](#)
- [2. Draft Joshua Tree Community Plan](#)
- [3. Draft Lucerne Valley Community Plan](#)
- [4. Draft Morongo Valley Community Plan](#)
- [5. Draft Phelan/Pinon Hills Community Plan](#)